AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace line 27 on page 4 to line 18 on page 5 of the present application with the following paragraphs.

In a first aspect, the invention provides a method for handling packet flows, comprising sequences of data packets, in a communication or computer system, the method comprising: assigning an exit number to each said packet; queuing said packets in buffer means; allocating said exit numbers to storage bins, each bin accepting a respective range of orders of exit numbers; and outputting the queued packets in a predetermined order according to an order list determined by said exit numbers assigned to said packets before said packets are queued; the method characterized by the step, before said outputting step, of sorting the contents of a bin containing a first range of exit numbers into a plurality of bins each containing a smaller range of exit numbers, the bins for higher order exit number packet records having a larger range than bins for lower order exit number packet records, and wherein said queuing step comprises placing packet records, each record containing information about its respective packet, together with their respective exit numbers in said bins.

In a second aspect, the invention provides a data manager for handling packet flows, comprising sequences of data packets, in a communication or computer system, the system comprising: assigning means for assigning an exit number to each said packet; buffer means for queuing said packets; a series of storage bins; allocating means for allocating said exit numbers to said storage bins together with packet records, each record containing information about its respective packet, each bin accepting a respective range of orders of exit numbers, the bins for higher order exit number packet records having a larger range than bins for lower order exit number packet records; and output means for outputting the queued packets in a predetermined order according to an order list determined by said exit numbers assigned to said packets before said packets are queued; the system characterised by sorting means upstream of said output means for sorting the

contents of a bin containing a first range of exit numbers into a plurality of bins each containing a smaller range of exit numbers.

Exit number information is preferably assigned to packet records which are queued in a separate buffer means to that in which said packets are queued.   The packet records are preferably of fixed length and shorter than said packets.

~~The buffer means for said packet records conveniently consist of said bins, the bins for higher exit number packet records having a larger range than bins for lower exit number packet records.~~